



## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROPER SEPTIC SYSTEM INSPECTION, MAINTENANCE, HAULING AND DISPOSAL

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# SEPTIC SYSTEM INSPECTIONS IN NEW MEXICO



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

If you sell or prepare a title for a residential or commercial property in New Mexico that has an existing on-site septic system, the current owner **MUST** have that system inspected and evaluated by a qualified professional. Here are the steps to follow:

**1) Permit Search** – Determine whether the property's septic system has an existing Liquid Waste Permit. Outside of unincorporated Bernalillo County, the property owner can search the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) database at: [www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/LiquidWaste/dbasegateway.html](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/LiquidWaste/dbasegateway.html); or fill out and submit to NMED a request for a liquid waste permit search. Within Bernalillo County, contact the Bernalillo County Office of Environmental Health at the number listed on the back of this brochure to determine if there is a permit for the system.



**2) Existing Permit** – If the system has an existing permit, the next step is to contact a Liquid Waste Contractor who holds an appropriate license from the Construction Industries Division (CID), is a Professional Engineer or holds a National Association of Waste Transporters (NAWT) certification. In Bernalillo County NAWT certification is required. Contact information for all of these organizations is on the back of this brochure. The Contractor will inspect and evaluate the system and submit an evaluation form to the local NMED office, or for systems within Bernalillo County, to the Bernalillo County Office of Environmental Health.

**3) No Existing Permit** – If an existing permit cannot be located, the next step is to have the system evaluated by a qualified Liquid Waste Contractor. After the system is evaluated, the owner must apply to NMED for a Certificate of Registration for continued operation if the system is outside Bernalillo County. If the system is located within Bernalillo County, the owner must apply to the Bernalillo County Office of Environmental Health for a Wastewater Operating Permit. Septic system permits are limited to 2,000 gallons per day. If the septic system is designed for more than 2,000 gallons a day for domestic (residential) use or handles waste that is considered non-domestic, a discharge plan may be required.

## WHY SEPTIC SYSTEMS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED

**Proper septic system maintenance can save property owners money.** Property owners should be aware of the need to pump out the system before it overflows, and to have it periodically checked to make sure all parts, including the drain field, are in proper working order. Replacing a septic system that fails can be very expensive, and a major inconvenience.

Also, proper septic system maintenance can protect our area's groundwater and the wells of nearby neighbors. ***Household septic tanks and cesspools constitute the single largest source of ground water contamination in the state, according to the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission.***

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE

In Bernalillo County, the PIPE program is available to cover plumbing costs for abandoning an existing septic system and connecting to a municipal sewer line (if available) or to pay for replacing a septic system if a municipal sewer is not available. The PIPE program may provide as much as \$4,300 in assistance based on the number of persons living in a home and the total combined incomes of all people living in the home, including taxable and non-taxable income. To qualify, a homeowner must have lived in the home for the past year and the total full value of the home cannot exceed \$189,700. For more information, contact the Bernalillo County Public Works Department at the number listed on the back of this brochure.

## WHEN A SEPTIC SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE PUMPED OUT

When a septic system needs to be pumped out in order for it to be certified for a property to be transferred, ***make sure that the company performing this task has the proper permit and is also committed to disposing of the septic waste responsibly. Both sides of the septic tank should be pumped out.*** The company doing the pumping and hauling the waste away should provide an invoice and the following information:

- 1) How much septic waste was pumped out of the system;
- 2) Where and when it is being disposed of; and
- 3) When follow-up maintenance is recommended.

## EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS ON PROPER SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Many homeowners may not be aware of how their septic system works or how to properly maintain it. While supplies last, you can contact the Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District to request free handouts for septic system owners. Many septic waste haulers also put in place a "reminder" system to let their customers know when it is time to have the septic system looked at and/or their septic tank pumped out again.